

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5235

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI LE IS SY
SUBJ: SITUATION IN LEBANON

1. THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY TELEGRAMS EXCHANGED RECENTLY ON LEBANON THAT IT IS HARD TO KEEP UP WITH THEM AND WE HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO COMMENT ON A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS. THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ARE AN ATTEMPT TO CATCH UP WITH SOME OF THEM.

2. TEL AVIV 11887. WE FIND THIS MESSAGE SOBER AND WELL REASONED, BUT WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS:

(A) IF ISRAELIS REGARD A REASSERTION OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY BASED ON A RECONSTRUCTED ARMY AND A POLITICAL CONSENSUS AS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, (1) DO THEY MEAN THAT IN THE MARTIN LUTHER KING; I.E., A POSITIVE SENSE? (2) WHAT IS THEIR ALTERNATIVE IF THEY MEAN IT IN A NEGATIVE SENSE?

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(B) DOES TEL AVIV MEAN BY LAST SENTENCE OF SAME TELEGRAM ABOUT NOT STANDING BY, THAT WE SHOULD INTERVENE AGAINST THE SYRIANS? WHAT DOES IT SUGGEST WE DO? WE NEED IDEAS.

3. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT CYNICAL ISRAELI ANALYSIS IN PARA 6 OF TEL AVIV'S 11887 IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT MADE BY SARKIS

TO ME ON SEPTEMBER 7. HE SAID THAT NO ONE DID ANYTHING FOR NOTHING. "AFTER 2,000-3,000 CASUALTIES, SYRIANS HAVE A BILL TO PRESENT. U.S. HAD BILL TO PRESENT WHEN IT STOPPED THE ISRAELIS IN 1956. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS, BUT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN ONE." (I DID NOT KNOW WE EVER PRESENTED BILLS BUT THOUGHT WE ONLY PAID OTHER PEOPLES'.)

4. RE JIDDA'S 6402, I DON'T THINK BOUTROS SAID THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WILL HAVE TO BE WEAKENED. THAT'S WHAT HE SAID SYRIANS WANT TO DO. NEITHER HE NOR SARKIS REALLY WANT CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WEAKENED UNLESS PALESTINIANS ARE WEAKENED TOO. HOWEVER, FROM TENOR OF BOUTROS CONVERSATION I BELIEVE HE DOES SHARE THE SYRIAN OBJECTIVE OF PREVENTING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS FROM "THREATENING THE GOL AND ITS PEOPLE (BEIRUT 5155, PARA 16) EVEN THOUGH HE THINKS THE MEANS SYRIANS ARE USING ARE WRONG.

5. RE PARA 2 JIDDA'S 6402, I ASKED SARKIS ON SEPTEMBER 7 HOW HE FELT ABOUT A RESTRICTED ARAB SUMMIT ON LEBANON AND HE SAID JUST LIKE HE FELT LAST TIME WE DISCUSSED THE IDEA; IT IS UP TO THE SYRIANS.

6. RE ASSERTION IN PARA 1 OF JIDDA'S 6402 THAT SAUDIS ARE WORKING VERY HARD ON LEBANESE QUESTION, THEY MUST BE BURROWING FROM WITHIN, BECAUSE THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO SIGN OF LIFE HERE. SAUDI AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN AWAY FOR LAST TWO MONTHS AND THERE IS NOBODY THERE BUT THEM CHICKENS.

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7. RE DAMASCUS 5205, WE THINK LEBANESE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR SYRIANS IS CONSIDERABLY WEAKER THAN MESSAGE INDICATES. SYRIANS HAVE MADE MANY ENEMIES LOCALLY. WHILE FEW CHRISTIANS LIKE BULLYING TACTICS OF GEMAYELS AND CHAMOUNS, THERE IS GENERAL DISTRUST OF SYRIANS IN BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM COMMUNITIES. GOL SUPPORT FOR SYRIANS IS ALSO MUCH ATTENUATED. NEITHER SARKIS NOR BOUTROS LIKES WHAT SYRIANS ARE DOING, BUT BOTH FEEL HELPLESS. SYRIANS ARE, HOWEVER, A NECESSARY EVIL FOR MOMENT IN EYES SARKIS, HOSS AND BOUTROS, ALL OF WHOM BELIEVE INTERCOMMUNAL FIGHTING WILL BREAK OUT IF SYRIANS LEAVE BEFORE LEBANESE ARMY IS READY TO TAKE ITS PLACE. ACCORDING TO HOSS, ARMY CANNOT MOVE INTO BEIRUT UNTIL NEW ARMY LAW IS PASSED AND MUSLIMS HAVE SOME CONFIDENCE ARMY WILL NOT BE DOMINATED BY MARONITES.

PARKER

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